

## Message Text

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16/64

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

/054 W

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R 120607Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2166

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

USIA WASHDC

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 4592 SECTION 1 OF 2

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEPT PASS AID

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 1 SUBPARA C; OMISSION IN ORIGINAL)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: NEW TRENDS IN MANILA PRESS

REF: A) MANILA 4297 (SUPER I) B) MANILA 4233 :) MANILA 4008

D) MANILA 3085

SUMMARY: IN RECENT MONTHS MANILA NEWSPAPERS HAVE EXPANDED  
COVERAGE OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES. WHILE THIS SUGGESTS LOOSEN-  
ING OF MARTIAL LAW CONTROL IT IS MORE LIKELY RESULT OF EFFORTS  
TO USE PRESS MORE EFFECTIVELY TO ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT GOALS. IN  
SERIES OF MOVES, PRESIDENT HAS THEORETICALLY TURNED CONTROL OF  
PRESS BACK TO PUBLISHERS AND HAS ALLOWED MUCH GREATER (IF STILL  
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SELECTED) COVERAGE OF UNPALATABLE SUBJECTS SUCH AS MIN-

DANAO AND CRIME. BEFORE FEB. 27 REFERENDUM, GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO PUBLICIZE SELECTED INSTANCES OF OFFICIAL WRONGDOING. MORE RECENTLY, COVERAGE OF OSMENA/LOPEZ/AQUINO HEARINGS HAS BEEN SURPRISINGLY VOLUMINOUS AND ACCURATE. LAST BUT NOT LEAST, FIRST LADY BEEN ENCOURAGING GLORIFICATION OF "THIRD WORLD" COUPLED WITH POTSHOTS AT U.S. ONE BENEFICIAL SIDE EFFECT OF ALL THIS HAS BEEN TO GIVE FILIPINOS MORE NEWS AND OPINION THAN THEY HAVE SAVED SINCE ADVENT OF MARTIAL LAW. NEW TREND IN PRESS OWES SOMETHING TO GROWING SELF-CONFIDENCE OF MATURING REGIME, LEADING TO APPARENT REALIZATION THAT CRUDE BLACKOUT OF "BAD" NEWS AND TOTAL UNIFORMITY OF VIEWPOINT DOES FAR MORE TO UNDERMINE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE THAN CONTROLLED COVERAGE. RENEWED ANTI-AMERICAN STRAIN SHOULD BE SEEN IN CONTEXT OF TREND TOWARD MORE CALCULATED USE OF PRESS (IN THIS CASE BY FIRST LADY.) THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AS YET THAT IT AMOUNTS TO A GOVERNMENT ASSAULT ON THE US IMAGE. PRESIDENT KNOWS WHAT IMELDA AND HER FRIENDS ARE UP TO AND PROBABLY FEELS THEIR ANTI-AMERICANISM SERVES USEFUL PURPOSE OF ENHANCING PHILIPPINES CREDIBILITY WITH THIRD WORLD, BUT HE IS UNLIKELY TO TOLERATE BAD MOUTHING TO POINT WHERE IT WOULD INTERFERE WITH SUBSTANCE OF US-PHILIPPINES BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY.

1. IN RECENT MONTHS MANILA DAILIES HAVE EXPANDED COVERAGE OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN WAY WHICH SUGGESTS SOME LOOSENING MARTIAL LAW PRESS CONTROL, BUT IS PROBABLY RESULT OF EFFORTS TO USE PRESS MORE EFFECTIVELY TO ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT GOALS. LATEST WRINKLE HAS BEEN LIMITED RECRUDESCENCE OF ANTI-AMERICAN THEMES LINKED WITH BOOSTING OF THIRD WORLD AND PHILIPPINE IDENTITY THEREWITH. ALTHOUGH TONE OF PRESS IS STILL FAR FROM FRANTIC FREEDOM OF PRE-MARTIAL LAW DAYS, ONGOING CHANGE HAS ALREADY BEEN SUBSTANTIAL AND AS AN INCIDENTAL RESULT FILIPINOS ARE GETTING A MUCH GREATER (IF STILL SELECTED) VARIETY OF NEWS AND VIEWS ON POLITICAL TOPICS. THIS PHENOMENON IS THE OUTGROWTH OF VARIOUS FACTORS, AS FOLLOWS:

A. RETURN OF CONTROL FORMALITIES TO PUBLISHERS. IN NOVEMBER 1974 MEDIA ADVISORY COUNCIL WAS ABOLISHED BY PRESIDENTIAL DECREE AND ONUS FOR PRESS GUIDANCE SUPPOSEDLY CONFIDENTIAL

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PASSED TO COMMITTEE OF PUBLISHERS HEADED BY GEN. HANS MENZI (BULLETIN TODAY). SOME RENEWED TREATMENT OF FORMERLY TABOO TOPICS (LIKE SEX) MAY BE DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THIS CHANGE.

B. "CRITICISM" THAT GOP WANTS. IN JANUARY PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED LIMITED FREEDOM FOR PRESS TO PRINT OPPOSITION VIEWS ON ISSUES AT STAKE IN FEB. 27 REFERENDUM. IN FACT,

PRESS TOOK VIRTUALLY NO ADVANTAGE OF THIS "OPPORTUNITY" AND COVERAGE OF ANTI-REFERENDUM AND OPPOSITION (MOSTLY CHURCH) ACTIVITIES WAS DOCTORED BEYOND RECOGNITION. HOWEVER, DURING SAME PERIOD, AND IN PART TO SUPPORT MARCOS' BID FOR AUTHORITY TO REPLACE LOCAL OFFICIALS, PRESS BEGAN PLAYING STORIES OF OFFICIAL AND MILITARY MALPRACTICE. SELECTED REPOFFS AND MALFEASANCES RANGING FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION KICKBACKS ON FLAG PROCUREMENT TO FERTILIZER MANIPULATION BEGAN TO MAKE HEADLINES, AS DID SOME CASES OF DISCIPLINE METED OUT TO ERRING MILITARY FOR ABUSE OF AUTHORITY. IN VIRTUALLY ALL SUCH CASES IT WAS CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT PRESS WAS BEING FED INFORMATION RATHER THAN DOING ITS OWN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING.

C. "NEW MEDIA POLICY" IN MINDANAO. ON MARCH 2 PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT HENCEFORTH GOVERNMENT WOULD FACILITATE COVERAGE OF MINDANAO FIGHTING (REF D). AT SAME TIME DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BEGAN BRIEFING REPORTERS AND RELEATING UNPRECEDENTED VOLUME OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE WAR. WHILE SUCH INFORMATION IS BEING SELECTED TO EMPHASIZE GOVERNMENT VICTORIES (AND REBEL ATROCITIES) SOME BAD NEWS INEVITABLY SLIPS IN WITH THE GOOD, AND THE DISCERNING READER IS NOW GETTING MORE THAN A GLIMPSE OF HOW COSTLY AND DIFFICULT COMBATTING MUSLIM REBELLION HAS BECOME. IN RELATED MOVE, PRESIDENT HAS ALSO ALLOWED RENEWED REPORTING OF CRIME.

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